

**DECISION MEMO**  
**EAGLE ROCK REFORESTATION PROJECT**  
**WILLIAMS RANGER DISTRICT, KAIBAB NATIONAL FOREST**  
**WILLIAMS, ARIZONA**

**TOWNSHIP 17 SOUTH, RANGE 4 EAST, SECTIONS 15, 16, 20, 21, 22**  
**(GILA AND SALT RIVER BASELINE MERIDIAN)**

**DECEMBER, 2012**

**I. BACKGROUND**

The “Eagle Rock” fire was started by lightning on Friday, June 11, 2010, 11 miles NE of Williams and burned 3,374 acres (See map #1). Approximately 1,382 acres burned under high severity (See map #2). Immediately following the fire, measures were taken to mitigate the effects of fire on natural resources. Aerial seeding of grasses took place on 600 acres of severely burned areas. As a result, the establishment of grasses improved the retention of upper level soil layers. However, natural regeneration of ponderosa pine is not likely due to the distance from a seed source. Therefore, establishment of ponderosa pine will increase long term soil stabilization.

**II. DECISION**

I have decided to reforest some areas of the Eagle Rock Fire that were severely burned. Ponderosa pine seedlings will be planted on approximately 300 acres within the perimeter of the Eagle Rock Fire. All plantations will provide protection from wildlife predation of planted seedlings. (See map #3)

Three plantation areas of approximately 190 acres, have been identified as inaccessible for fence construction due to steep slopes, and will require the use of protection cones or vexar tubes to adequately shield seedlings from predation. Two plantation areas of approximately 98 acres are accessible for fence construction. Therefore, work in these plantation areas consists of constructing enclosures using fence materials. The remaining 12 acres will be planted along the Cross Country Ski Trail, and approximately eight of the 300 acres will be designated for progeny testing and study.

Fence design will keep large animals from browsing pine seedlings. Fence construction consists of a wire fence, approximately eight-foot in height. Site preparation in fence enclosure areas will consist of hand felling, with chainsaws, all dead trees which pose a hazard to the fences. This is being done to provide long term protection to the fences and to reduce maintenance costs. Any dead standing trees with nest cavities, regardless of size, will be retained. Felled trees will be limbed and piled by machine for burning.

Due to the lack of fine material on dead trees, live trees less than 18" DBH may be felled and piled to aid combustion. Piles will be burned when conditions are such that desired consumption will be achieved and smoke impacts in surrounding communities are minimized. Off road vehicles will be utilized for material transportation and safety mitigations. Slash and small tree boles will be retained to protect soil resources in appropriate places.

My decision includes the project design features identified throughout this document, as well as those documented in specialist reports located in the project record at the Williams Ranger District Office. All specialists analyzed resource impacts using the best available science in their analysis of the proposed action. The project design criteria within the proposed action will include any mitigation measures identified by the resource specialists. My decision is also based on a review of the project record.

#### Kaibab Forest Plan Direction

The project area is found in Ecosystem Management Area (EMA) two. The Kaibab Forest Plan, as amended, contains the following direction for this EMA related to the project:

- Formulate and implement control measures where and when the following damage occurs: soil compaction, loss of vegetative cover, tree damage and mortality (pg.41)
- Favor native species in all re-vegetation activities (pg. 41)
- Rehabilitate areas impacted by wildfire (pg. 42)

### **III. REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION**

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of excluded actions is identified in agency directives as: *Regeneration of an area to native trees species, including site preparation that does not involve the use of herbicides or result in vegetation type conversion.*(ii) *Planting trees or mechanical seed dispersal of native tree species following a fire, flood, or landslide.* 36 CFR 220.6(e) (5), Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 30, Section 32.2.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

**a. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.**

Based on the biological evaluation completed for the project, the project will have no effect on federal, state or USDA Forest Service listed species.

**b. Floodplains, wetlands or municipal watersheds.**

There are no floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds within the project area.

**c. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas.**

There are no congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas.

**d. Inventoried roadless areas.**

There are no inventoried roadless areas within the project area.

**e. Research natural areas.**

This area is not categorized as a research natural area.

**f. Archaeological sites or historic properties or areas.**

All but one of the plantation locations have been 100% surveyed. The one area that has not been surveyed is located on the steep slopes of the northern side of RS Hill. Kaibab archeologists know from experience that the National Register Eligible cultural resources do not occur on steep slopes in this area, and since it's been affected by erosion since the fire, there are not likely to be cultural resources within the unsurveyed area. Therefore there is no need to survey the remaining areas in the RS Hill plantation location. Known existing heritage resources will be protected. If any additional heritage resources are discovered during maintenance, mitigation measures will be taken to protect them.

#### **IV. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

An interdisciplinary Team (IDT) consisting of cultural, wildlife, fuels, soils, range, and recreation specialists reviewed the proposal and identified any issues or concerns. The proposed project was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Action (SOPA), July 1, 2012. A notice for comments was placed in the Arizona Daily Sun, the official paper of record on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012. No comments or only supportive comments were received.

#### **V. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS**

Forest Plan Consistency (National Forest Management Act or NFMA) - NFMA requires the development of long-range land and resource management plans. The Kaibab National Forest Plan was approved in 1988, as required by this Act. The Plan has been reviewed in consideration of this project. This decision is responsive to the guiding direction contained in the Forest Plan (See Section II of this document). This Decision Memo is consistent with standards and guidelines contained in the forest plan for soil, hydrology, lands, archeology, wildlife, range, recreation, and fire.

Sensitive Species (Forest Service Manual 2670) - This manual direction requires analysis of potential impacts to sensitive species, those species for which the Southwestern Regional Forester has identified population viability as a concern. In September 2007, the Southwestern Regional Forester approved the sensitive species list. An interdisciplinary view of potential effects of this decision memo upon sensitive species has been completed and is included in the specialist reports in the project record.

Environmental Justice (Executive Order (EO) 12898) - This EO requires consideration of whether projects would disproportionately impact minority or low-income populations. This decision complies with this order. Based on internal review the proposed action did not identify any adversely impacted local minority or low-income populations.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) - NEPA requires public involvement and consideration of potential environmental effects. This document and the project record provide documentation for this decision which supports compliance with this Act.

## **VI. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES**

In light of a recent court ruling (*Sequoia ForestKeeper v. Tidwell* 11-cv-00679-LJO-DLB (E.D. Cal.)), the USDA Forest Service will provide public notice, comment, and opportunity for administrative appeal for projects and activities documented with a “Decision Memo” (36 CFR 220.6(e)) until new instructions are issued by the Washington Office, of the Agency issues regulations addressing the Court’s ruling.

No comments or only supportive comments were received; therefore this decision is not subject to appeal per 36 CFR 215.12.

## **VII. IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

Implementation of this project may take place immediately upon publication of the legal notice in the Arizona Daily Sun, the newspaper of record for the Williams Ranger District.

## **VIII. CONTACT**

Further information about this decision can be obtained from the Williams Ranger District during normal office hours (weekdays, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) at 742 S. Clover in Williams, Arizona; by Phone: 928-635-5600; by Fax: 928-635-5680; or by mail; 742 S. Clover, Williams, AZ, 86046. For additional information, please contact Richard Gonzalez, Williams District Silviculturist at 928-635-5600.

*/s/ Martie Schramm*

*December 7, 2012*

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MARTIE SCHRAMM

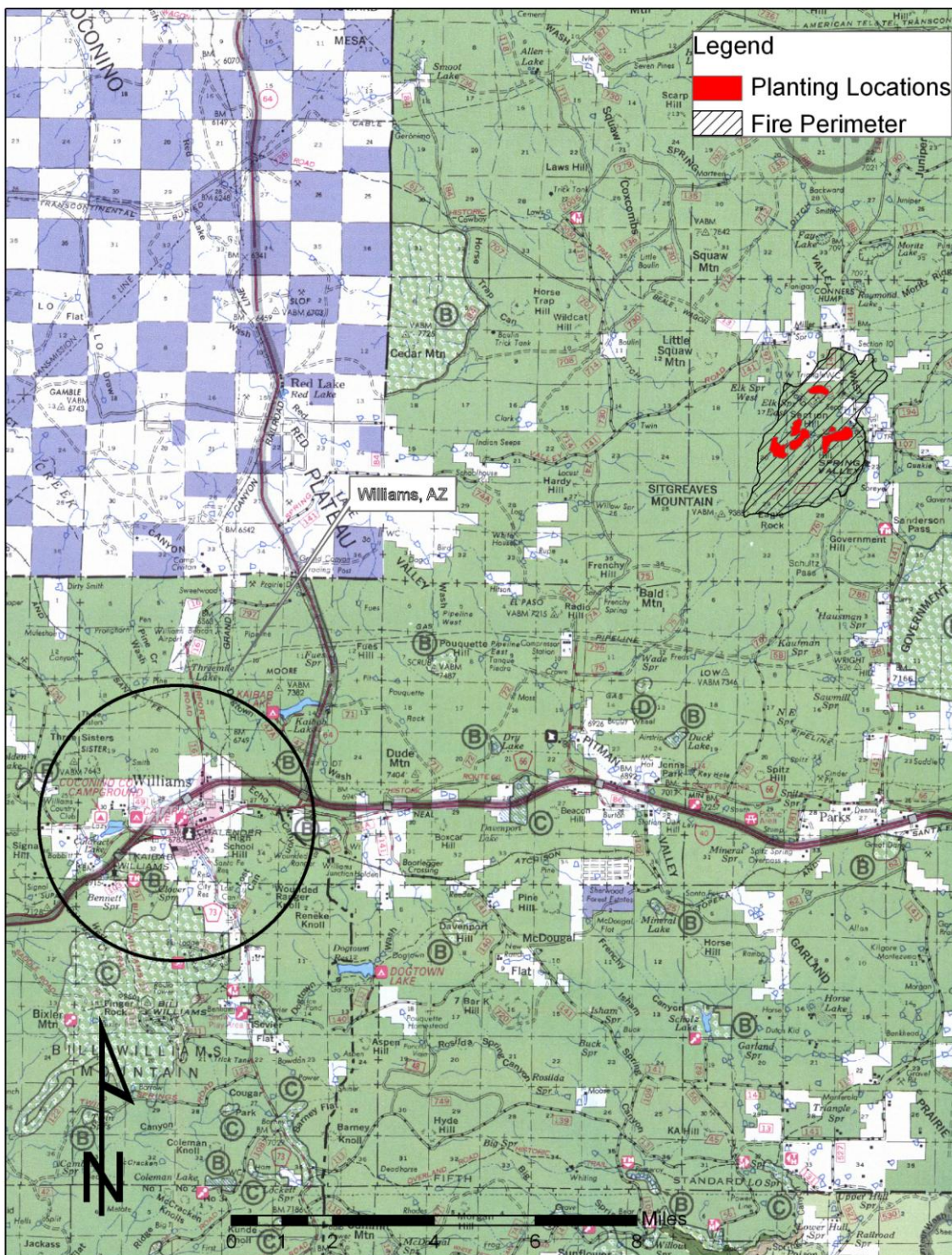
Date

District Ranger

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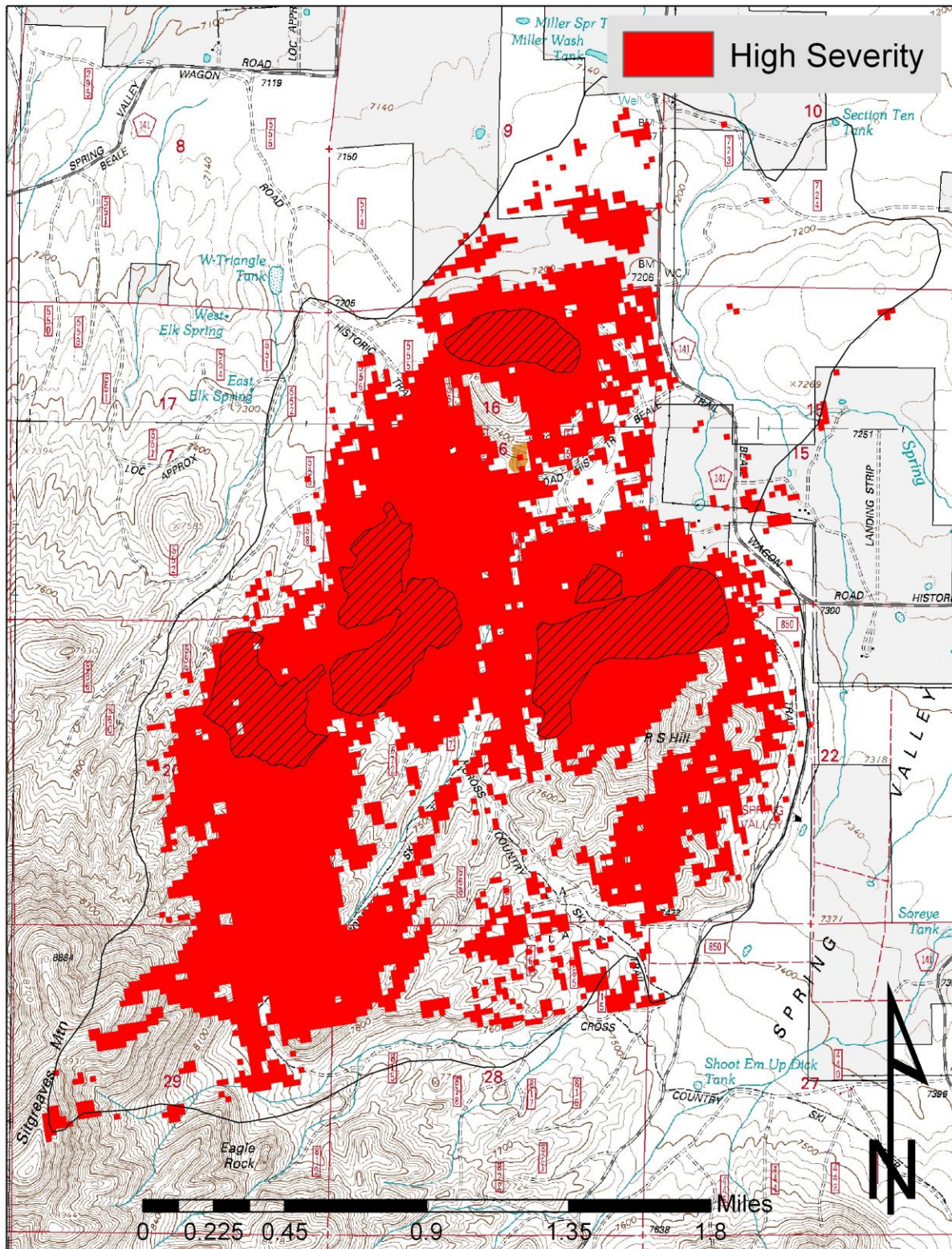


### Map 1: Vicinity Map





Map 2: Eagle rock high severity burned areas.





Map 3. Eagle Rock Plantation Locations

